

Report back: Free African Media panel discussion

 By [Theresa Mallinson](#)

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Did you know they have "press rallies" in Malawi? That the media in Senegal is relatively free, but doesn't always report the news responsibly? That most of Kenya's media is owned by politicians? These are just a few of the many interesting - and chilling - facts and opinions that came to light at a panel discussion in Johannesburg last week.

FREEAFRICANMEDIA But the overwhelming message is that African journalists have a lot to say - and are eager to explore ways that will allow them say it without fear of repercussions.

The "Freeing African media: democracy and the role of media in Africa" panel discussion, held on Wednesday morning, 2 March 2011, and hosted by [Free African Media](#), and the African Regional Media Hub, provided a platform for journalists from African countries to share their experiences - and offer each other advice. As Free African Media deputy editor and moderator of the panel Phillip de Wet put it: "(We need) to get that conversation going: So we can talk to each other; so we can learn from each other; so we can share our experiences; so we can understand the problems we face in our various countries and how we can overcome them in the interests of democracy."

The main themes of the morning's discussion were the relationship between media and democracy, the role social media played in fomenting revolution North Africa, the difficulties of working in countries where much of the media is state-owned, the issue of self-censorship and the levels of harassment faced by journalists in different countries.

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ABOUT THERESA MALLINSON

Theresa Mallinson has lived and worked as an itinerant writer, subeditor and sometimes teacher, plying her trade in such exotic destinations as Vaduz, Dubai, and Cape Town. But that's all changed since she became a journalist at the Daily Maverick (www.thedailymaverick.co.za) and managing editor at Free African Media. For now, she's very happy to be living in Jozi. Follow her on Twitter at [@tmallinson](#) and contact her on theresa.mallinson@gmail.com
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